

February 14, 2011

Washington, D.C. – Congressman Jerry McNerney (CA-11) today sent a letter to Governor Jerry Brown, urging that he reconsider proposed cuts to programs that serve veterans, such as the County Veterans Service Offices and Operation Welcome Home. California is home to more than 2 million veterans and nearly 30,000 veterans return home to California from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan every year.

County Veterans Service Offices provide local advocates for veterans and offer assistance with benefit claims and other important services. They are often the initial point of contact for veterans in our communities. Operation Welcome Home is a new state program to help service members transition into civilian life, including by providing assistance obtaining employment, education and health services.

The Governor's current state budget proposal includes a reduction in veterans' services totaling \$9.9 million. These cuts would eliminate state support for County Veterans Service Offices and Operation Welcome Home.

The full text of the letter is below.

February 14, 2011

The Honorable Jerry Brown
Governor
State of California
State Capitol, Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Brown:

California is home to more than 2 million veterans, more than any other state in the country. In addition, nearly 30,000 veterans return home to California from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan every year. This large and diverse veteran population deserves our best efforts to ensure they receive the benefits they have earned.

As we are all aware, controlling record state budget shortfalls will require a number of tough choices that must be made, and I appreciate your frank assessment of the budget challenges facing California. Every legitimate potential solution should be given fair and prudent consideration, and shared sacrifice will be required by many groups throughout California.

However, we cannot balance our state's budget on the shoulders of our nation's veterans. Veterans are heroes who risked their lives to keep our country secure. At a time when unemployment in California is in the double digits, and significantly higher among veterans, we cannot further restrict their opportunities.

Cutting millions of dollars from the County Veterans Service Offices (CVSOs) and Operation Welcome Home budgets will severely strain the ability of veterans and community leaders to succeed in a cooperative effort. Your current proposal includes a reduction in veterans' services totaling \$9.9 million, with \$7.6 million coming from local assistance and \$2.3 million from state operations. This proposal eliminates state support for our CVSOs and Operation Welcome Home.

California's CVSOs are an invaluable resource for the veteran community. Their role will be vitally important to the success of Operation Welcome Home, the state's new program to help service members transition into civilian life. Since 1995, CVSOs have helped approximately 1.3 million veterans and brought in \$2.7 billion in federal funds to the state. In addition, every state dollar spent on CVSOs returns nearly \$100 in federal veterans' benefits. These two critical assets generate too much benefit for California not to receive state support.

Your budget proposal is an honest effort to confront the fiscal problems facing our state. But as the budget process moves forward, I urge you not to reduce funding levels vital to our veterans.

Sincerely,

Jerry McNerney
Member of Congress

CC: Speaker John Pérez

President pro Tempore Darrell Steinberg